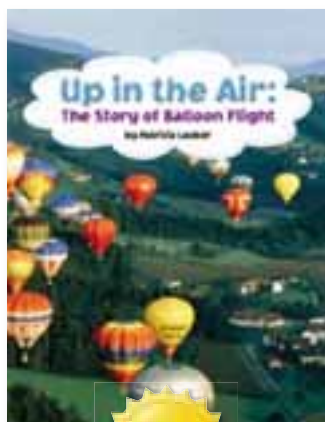


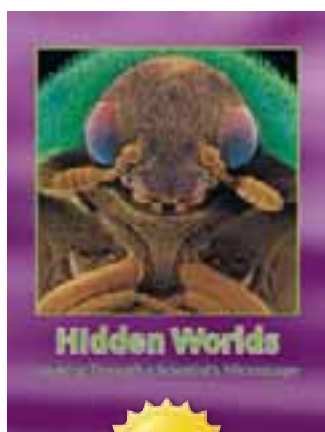
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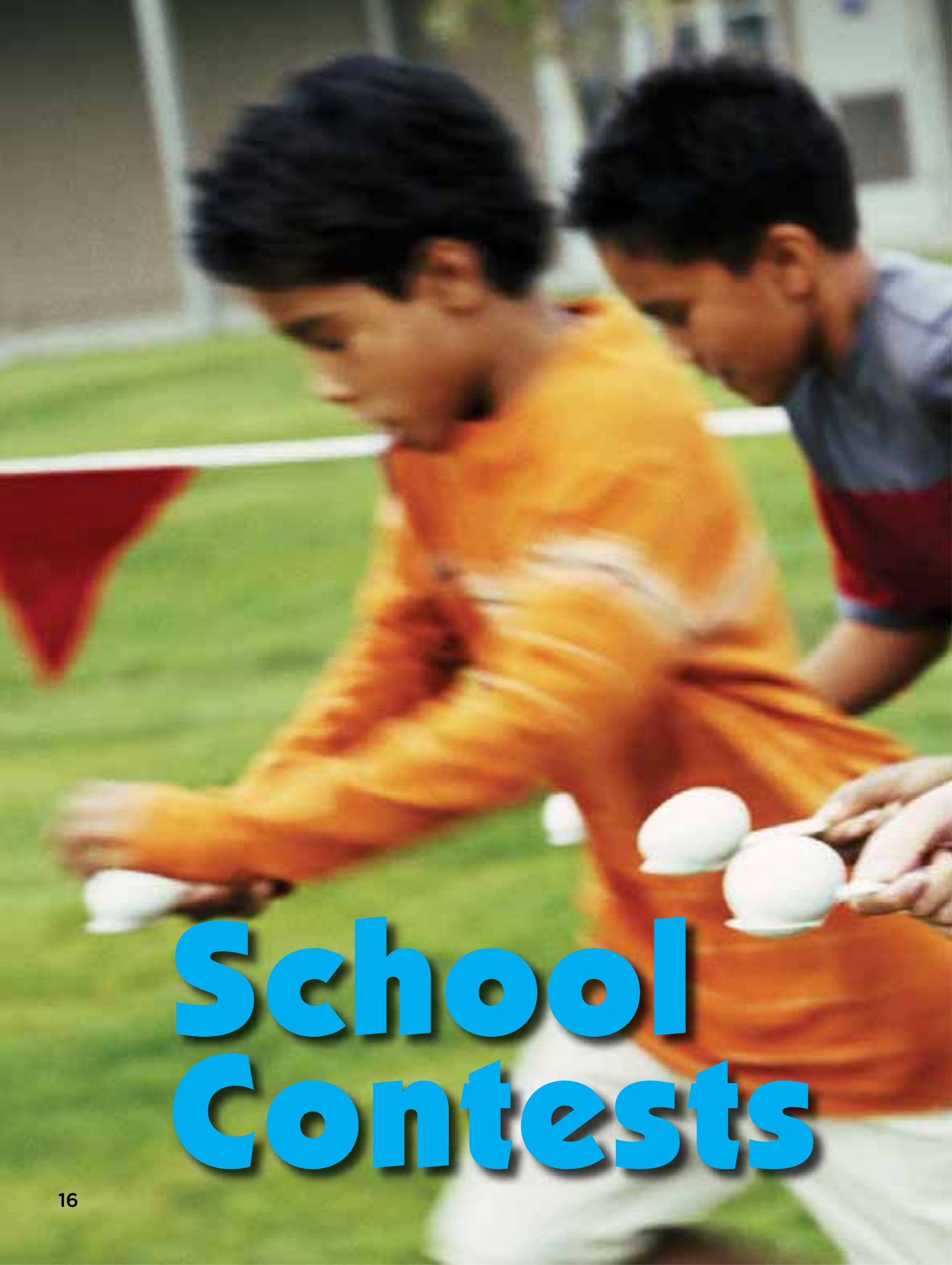
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A photograph of two students participating in an egg toss contest. The student in the foreground is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and is in a crouched position, preparing to throw a white egg. The student in the background is wearing a blue and red shirt and is also crouched, holding a white egg. A red flag is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is a grassy field with a building in the distance.

School Contests



Talk About It

What challenges and responsibilities come with entering a contest? What emotions can affect the contestants?



Find out more about school contests at

www.macmillanmh.com

Vocabulary

slumped	strands
soggy	gigantic
capable	credit
categories	luminous

Context Clues

Synonyms are words that mean the same or almost the same thing as other words. For example, *huge* is a synonym for *gigantic*. When you read an unfamiliar word, check to see if there is a synonym nearby to use as a context clue.

The Talent Contest



by Howard Gabe

As Danny put his lunch tray onto the cafeteria table, milk spilled all over his sandwich. He sat down, hung his head forward, and **slumped** over the food in front of him. Frowning, he began peeling the **soggy** milk-soaked bread from his sandwich. "This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever done!" he said.

"It's not that bad," said his friend Elena, who was sitting across from him. "Just get another sandwich."

"Sandwich? What sandwich? I am talking about the talent contest. It's only two weeks away and I don't know what I'm doing! Everybody will laugh at me. It's inevitable. There's no way to avoid it!"

"Don't be so negative, Danny," said Elena as she rolled her eyes. "You're going to be great. You're very **capable**. You have the skills to do just about anything."

Danny moved his lunch tray to the side and rested his head on the table.



"Sit up Danny," ordered Elena.
 "I have an idea. Let's brainstorm a list of things you could do. We'll divide the list into **categories** or groups. Let's start with music. You play the piano, right?"

"I stopped taking lessons in third grade," said Danny.

"What about singing a song?" suggested Elena.

Danny shook his head no. "Let's move on to another category."

"What about juggling?" asked Elena, as she twisted thin **strands** of hair around her finger.

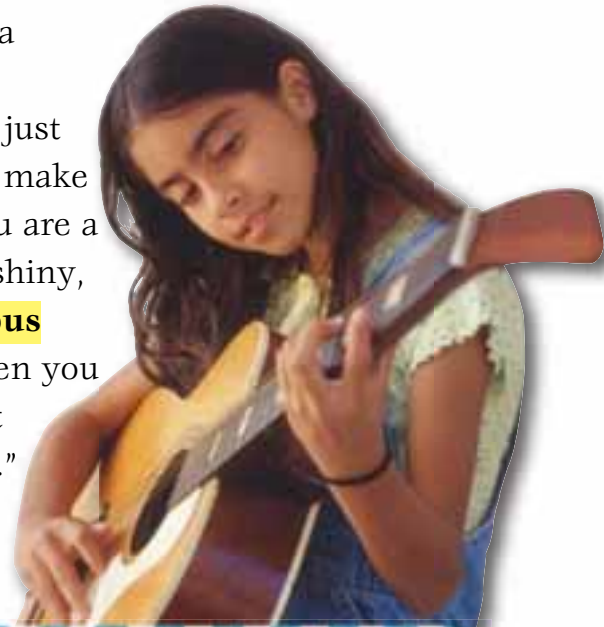
"I don't know how to juggle!" Danny almost shouted. "Elena, how did I get myself into this huge, **gigantic** mess?"

"Stop being so..." Elena paused. "That's it, DRAMATIC!" Elena shouted excitedly. "You could do a dramatic

reading. You definitely have the talent for it. Mrs. Pace always calls on you to read aloud in class. You could read a play aloud. Maybe you could even get extra **credit** from Mrs. Pace. She rewards students with points for doing extra reading work."

Danny thought for a minute. Then he smiled. "Elena," Danny said, "you are a great friend!"

Elena smiled back. "I just want to make sure you are a bright, shiny, **luminous** star when you step out onstage."



Reread for Comprehension



Story Structure Character and Plot

A Character and Plot Chart helps you figure out a character's personality and events of the plot. These traits and events are part of story structure. Use your Character and Plot Chart as you reread "The Talent Contest" to figure out Elena's traits and how her actions affect the plot of the story.

Character	Plot

Comprehension

Genre

Realistic Fiction uses settings, characters, and events that could actually exist.



Story Structure

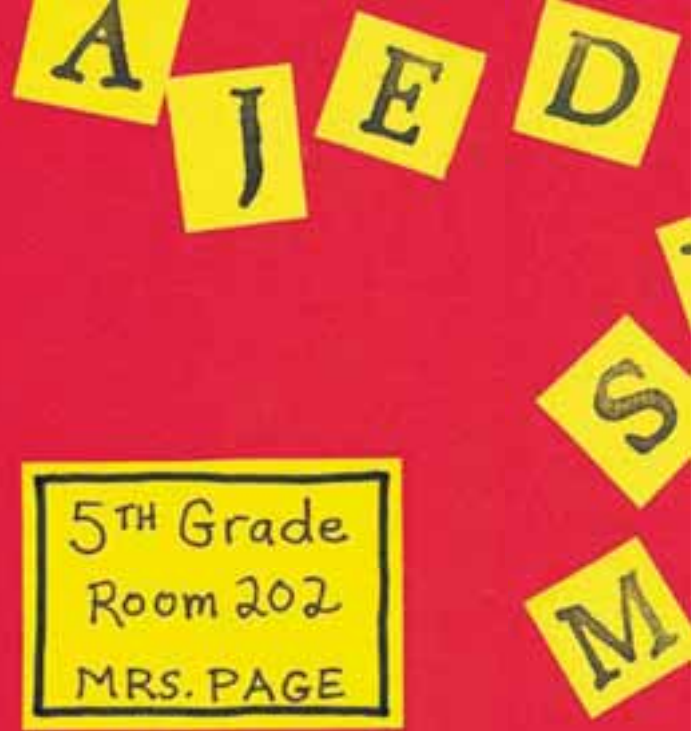
Character and Plot

As you read, use your Character and Plot Chart.

Character	Plot

Read to Find Out

How does the kind of person Sage is affect the plot?



Miss Alaineus

A VOCABULARY DISASTER

written and illustrated by
Debra Frasier





None of this would have happened if it wasn't for Forest. Forest is not a *thicket of trees*. Forest is a boy. A sick boy. A boy sneezing and coughing all over my desk and pencils.

I caught Forest's cold and had to stay home from school on Tuesday. Tuesday is Vocabulary Day at Webster School. Follow my advice: Never get sick on Vocabulary Day.

On Tuesday afternoon I called my best friend, Starr, who is not a **luminous** celestial object seen as a point of light in the sky, but a very smart girl who listens perfectly on Vocabulary Day. She was late for baseball practice, so she spelled the first fourteen vocabulary words as fast as she could.

I had to scribble them quickly because her mom was calling her to the car. "This last one's 'Miss Alaineus'!" Starr yelled. "I gotta go. I hope you feel better tomorrow, Sage." And she hung up the phone with a crash.



I didn't feel much better on Wednesday, so my mom called Mrs. Page, who is not a *single side of a printed sheet of paper usually found bound in a book*. She's my teacher, and actually Mrs. Page is a good name for her because she reads to us every day. My mom told her yes, I had my math problems and vocabulary words, and yes, I would get better soon.



Plot

How do you think Starr's rush to give Sage the vocabulary words will affect what happens next?

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. dinosaur
2. snake
3. museum
4. reptile
5. constrictor
6. herpetologist
7. fossil
8. carnivore
9. herbivore
10. nest
11. species
12. theory
13. hypothesis
14. category
15. Miss Alaineus

Every week Mrs. Page gives us a list of words with a theme, like Story Writing or Musical Performance or Electricity. We're supposed to look up each word in the dictionary, but sometimes I already know the words, so I try to make the definitions sound like I looked them up.



tree:

a large leafy plant with a tall wooden trunk that pushes roots into the ground and branches into the sky

automobile:



a vehicle, used to transport humans, usually consisting of four wheels, a steering wheel, and a radio

I thought I was pretty good at definitions until this week.

My mom says, "Pride goeth before a fall."

Pride: *an unduly high opinion of oneself.*

Goeth: *Old English for "to go."*

Fall: *what happened on Monday, Vocabulary Test Day.*



By Thursday afternoon my head felt like it was stuffed with cotton and my throat felt swollen shut. I finished defining my vocabulary words while propped up in bed with a box of tissues on one side and a **gigantic** red dictionary on the other. It's hard to look up words in a huge book while you're in bed blowing your nose, so I made my own dictionary language for as many of them as I could.

13. hypothesis: what you guess will happen in your science experiment
14. category: a bunch of things that are alike
15. Miss Alaineus:

The last word seemed a little odd to me because I couldn't figure out what she had to do with snakes or **categories** or theories. Mrs. Page rarely gives us people's names on our vocabulary lists, but we have had a few that turned into words, like Louis Pasteur for **pasteurization** and George Washington for **Washington, D.C.**, so I decided she must have been included for a reason.

You should know that for years I had wondered who Miss Alaineus was. When I was little I figured out that she had something to do with the kitchen, because the Miss Alaineus drawer held the spoons too big to fit anywhere else, the sharp corn holders shaped like tiny cobs, and the spaghetti spork, that weird cross between a spoon and a fork that perfectly lifts slippery spaghetti out of the bowl. I thought maybe she was an **ancestor**: *an ancient relative long dead*, who left us all these odd things in the drawer.

Then just last year my mom and I were at the grocery store and it all fell into place. We were in one of those Very Big Hurries when she said, "You go get some of that long Italian bread and two sticks of butter. I'll get Miss Alaineus' things and meet you here at the cash register."



I found the bread and butter, and my mom came back with spaghetti sauce, a can of Parmesan cheese, a can of corn, and a big green box of spaghetti with a beautiful woman on the front. She was drawn so that her hair tumbled perfectly across the box and ended in a little plastic window, making the spaghetti look just like the ends of the **strands** of her hair.

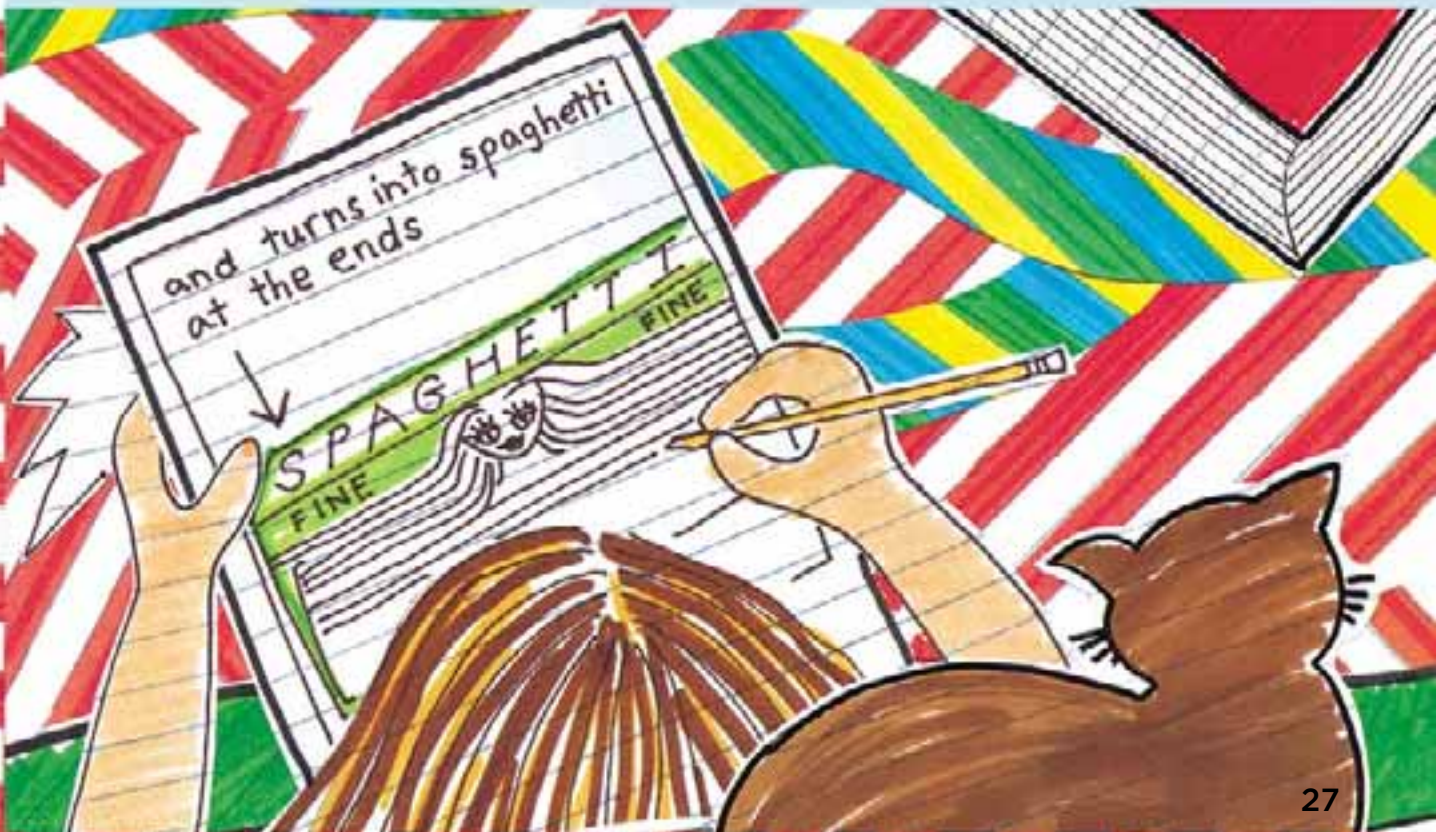
There she was—Miss Alaineus.

So, propped up on pillows in my bed, with a tissue in one hand and a pencil in the other, I wrote:

15. Miss Alaineus: the woman
on green spaghetti boxes
whose hair is the color
of uncooked pasta.

and turns into spaghetti
at the ends

And then I fell asleep.



a Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg H

Copy these problems:

$$\begin{array}{r} 15 \overline{) 20,365} \\ 3,455 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 63 \overline{) 405,329} \\ 8,089 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 237 \\ \times 45 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 3,639 \\ \times 99 \\ \hline \end{array}$$



I finally got better over the weekend and felt great on Monday. I turned in my homework to Mrs. Page and sat down at my desk, glad to be back at school with my friends. I was even glad to see Forest at our morning circle meeting.

"First, I want to remind you of the Tenth Annual Vocabulary Parade on Friday," said Mrs. Page. "I hope you are all working on your word costumes. Second, please remember to bring your bus money and permission slips for our science museum field trip tomorrow. And third, instead of our usual Monday test, we are going to have a Vocabulary Bee today."

h Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo

TODAY

Homework

Circle Time: 8:40
 Vocabulary Bee: 8:55
 Math : 9:30
 : 10:05
 R : 11:00
 : 11:45
 LUNCH : 12:15
 : 00
 : 00
 : 00



“Everyone line up here by the chalkboard, and I’ll choose a word from our list. After I pronounce the word, please spell and define it. If you are correct, go to the end of the line. If you miss the word, please sit down at your desk and look it up in the dictionary. Write the word five times and define it once.”

Starr was first with **museum**: “**M-U-S-E-U-M**: *a building for exhibiting objects about art or history or science,*” she said, and went to the back of the line.

Cliff, not a *high, steep face of rock*, but one very tall boy, answered to the word **dinosaur**: “**D-I-N-O-S-A-U-R**: *a prehistoric, extinct reptile, often huge,*” and he went to the back of the line.

I was tenth, and when Mrs. Page called out my word, I spelled: “Capital **M-I-S-S**, capital **A-L-A-I-N-E-U-S**,” and added, *“the woman on green spaghetti boxes whose hair is the color of uncooked pasta and turns into spaghetti at the ends.”*

There was a moment of silence in the room. I smiled at Mrs. Page. She waited to see if I would add anything else, and when I didn’t, she grinned. Not smiled—**grinned**: *to draw back the lips and bare the teeth, as in a very wide smile*—and the entire class burst into one huge giggling, laughing, falling-down mass of kids. Forest was doubled over. Starr, my best friend, was laughing so hard tears came to her eyes. By now, even Mrs. Page was laughing.

Pride goeth before a fall. I was **Sage**: *one who shows wisdom, experience, judgment*. Why were they laughing? “Wise-girl-with-words” my dad always called me. What had I said? I was beginning to turn red. **Red**: *the color of embarrassment*.



Finally the room quieted. Mrs. Page opened her dictionary and wrote on the chalkboard:

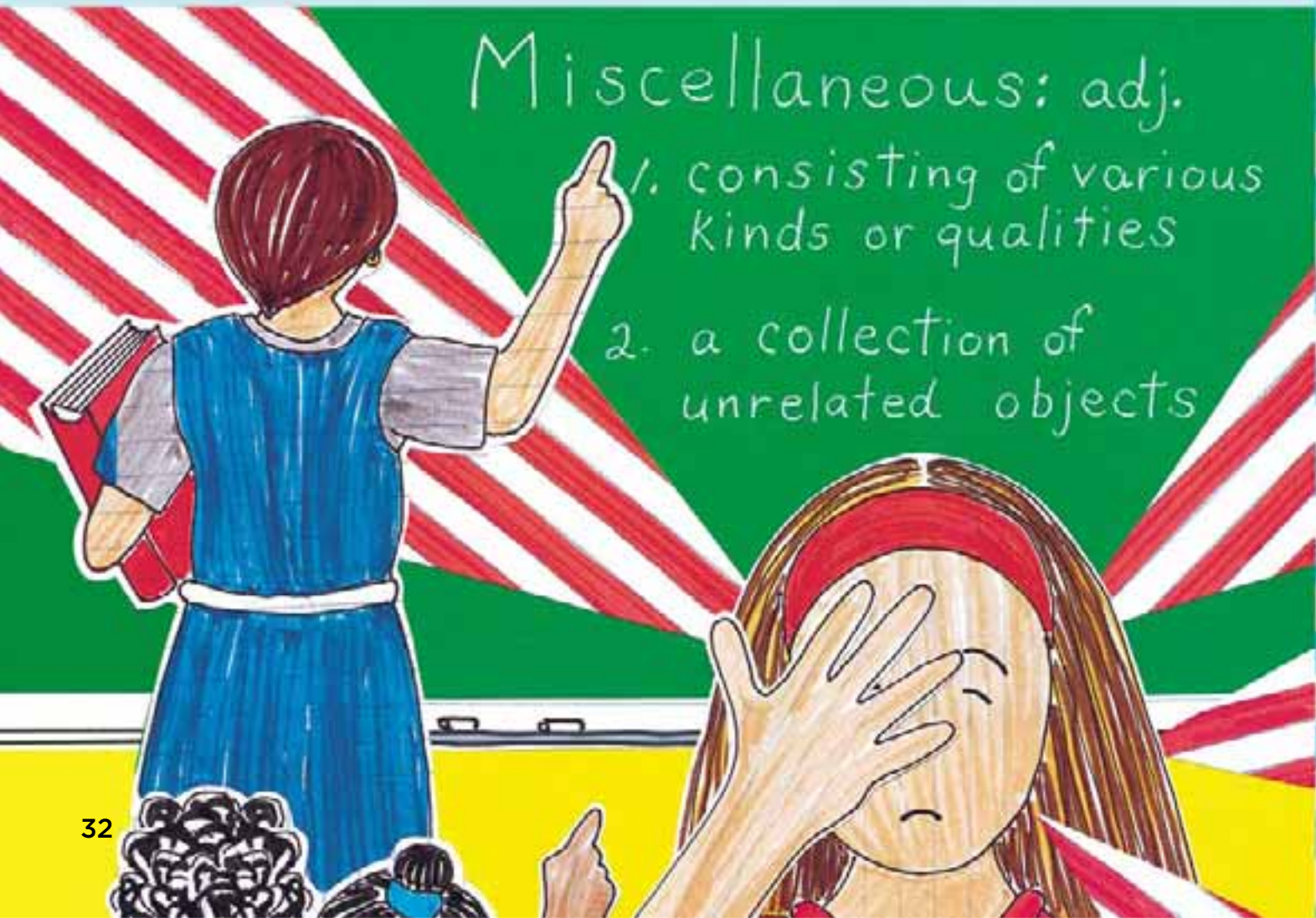
Miscellaneous: *adj. 1. consisting of various kinds or qualities 2. a collection of unrelated objects*

My jaw dropped as I looked at the spelling. My eyes bulged as I read the definition. I didn't bother to tell anyone about my mom and the spaghetti spork and the grocery store. **Humbled:** *aware of my shortcomings, modest, meek,* I dragged back to my seat and wrote **miscellaneous** five times and defined it once. And that's when I remembered I had even drawn a picture of the spaghetti box for extra **credit**. I was **devastated:** *wasted, ravaged.* **Ruined:** *destroyed.* **Finished:** *brought to an end.*



Character

What does Sage's reaction to her mistake tell you about her character?





They called me Miss Alaineus for the rest of the day. Sometimes a person couldn't even get the words out before bending over with laughter. The day took a week to end. When I got off the bus I **slumped** home—devastated, ruined, finished.

I told my mom the whole story, from the kitchen drawer to the grocery store to the Vocabulary Bee. Even my own mother laughed a little at the part about the drawing for extra credit, but at least she stopped fast and said, “You know what I always say . . . There’s gold in every mistake.”

Gold? *A bright yellow precious metal of great value?*

Mistake? *Something done, said, or thought in the wrong way?*

“Impossible,” I told her. **Impossible:** *not **capable** of happening.*

I couldn't believe I *ever* had to go back to school. But the next day we went to the science museum, and everyone forgot all about Miss Alaineus at the snake exhibit and the dinosaur bone lab. Then the guide said, "The field of bone archaeology has been influenced by a wide and unusual array of miscellaneous discoveries around the world." The class burst out laughing, and the guide was pleased with herself for entertaining us so easily. And I **knew**: *to apprehend with certainty*, that my mistake was still alive and well, and nothing like gold.

After school I lay on my bed and stared at the wall. How could I have been so stupid?





My mom came in and said it was time to work on my costume for the Vocabulary Parade. We had finished the cape for **Capable**, but I still needed to make the lettering down the back.

“Mom,” I said, “I could only be a mistake this year. **Miss Stake.**”

Suddenly I sat up.

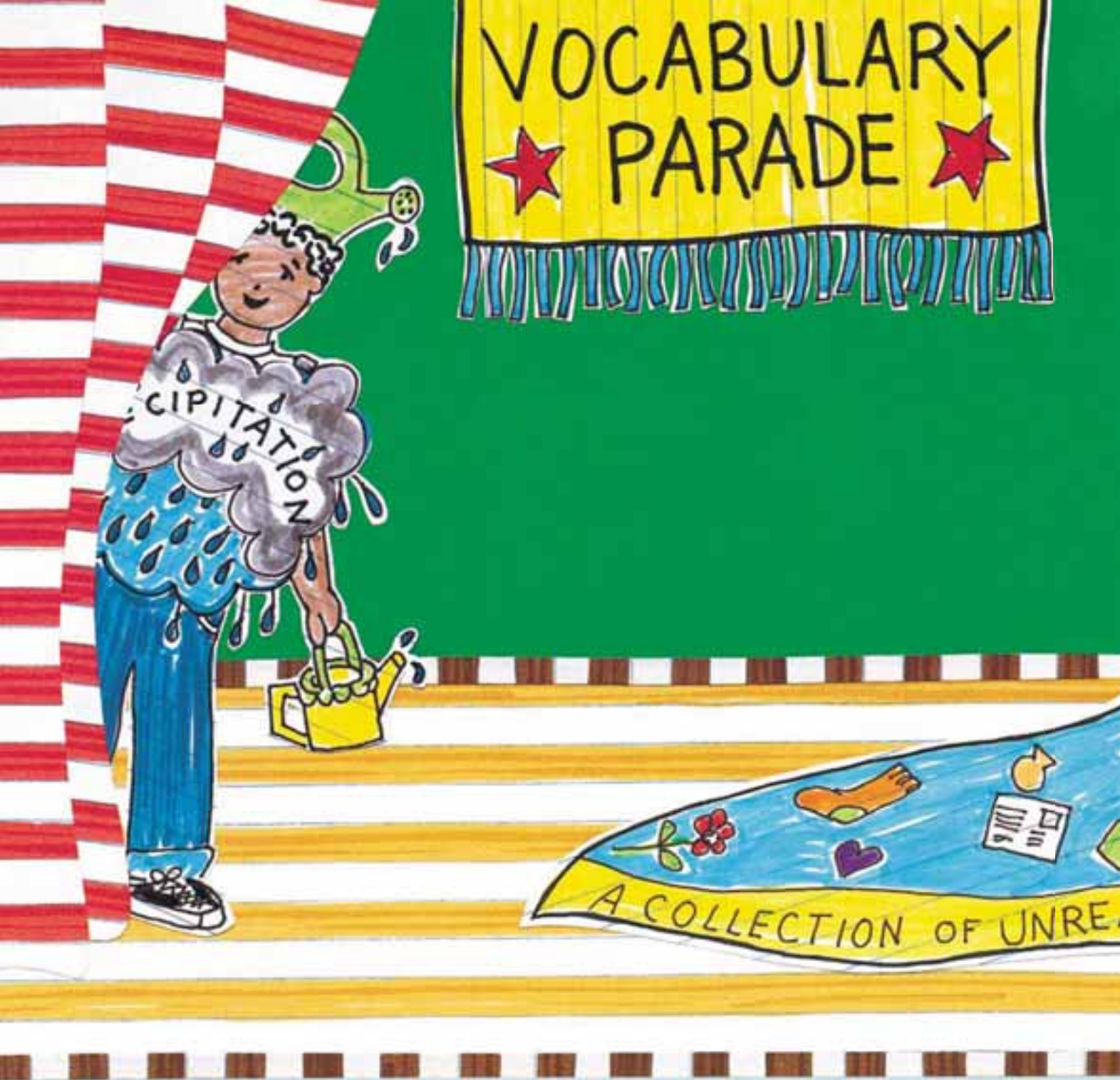
I looked at my mom. She looked at me.

I smiled.

She smiled.

“Sweetheart,” she said, “let’s take another look at that cape.”

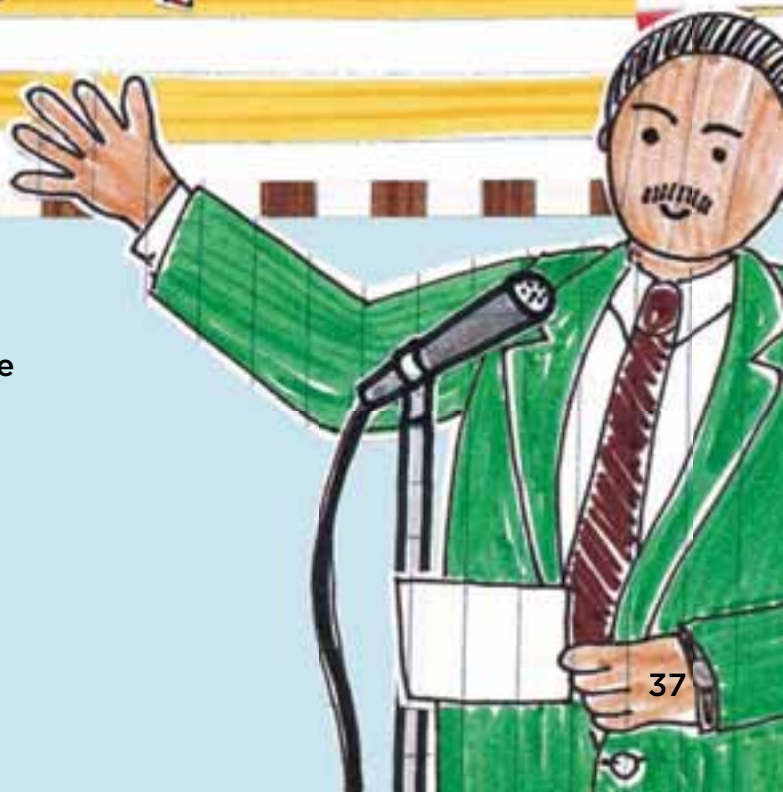




It took the most courage I've ever had to walk out on that stage as **Miss Alaineus**, *Queen of All Miscellaneous Things*. But when Mr. Bell read my word and definition, everyone applauded and laughed **wildly**: *in a manner lacking all restraint*, and I grinned at my mom across the auditorium.



Forest came right after me. When he bowed, his **Precipitation** watering-can hat rained on Mr. Bell's new suit, and the entire audience gasped, then cheered when Mr. Bell smiled at his **soggy** clothes.

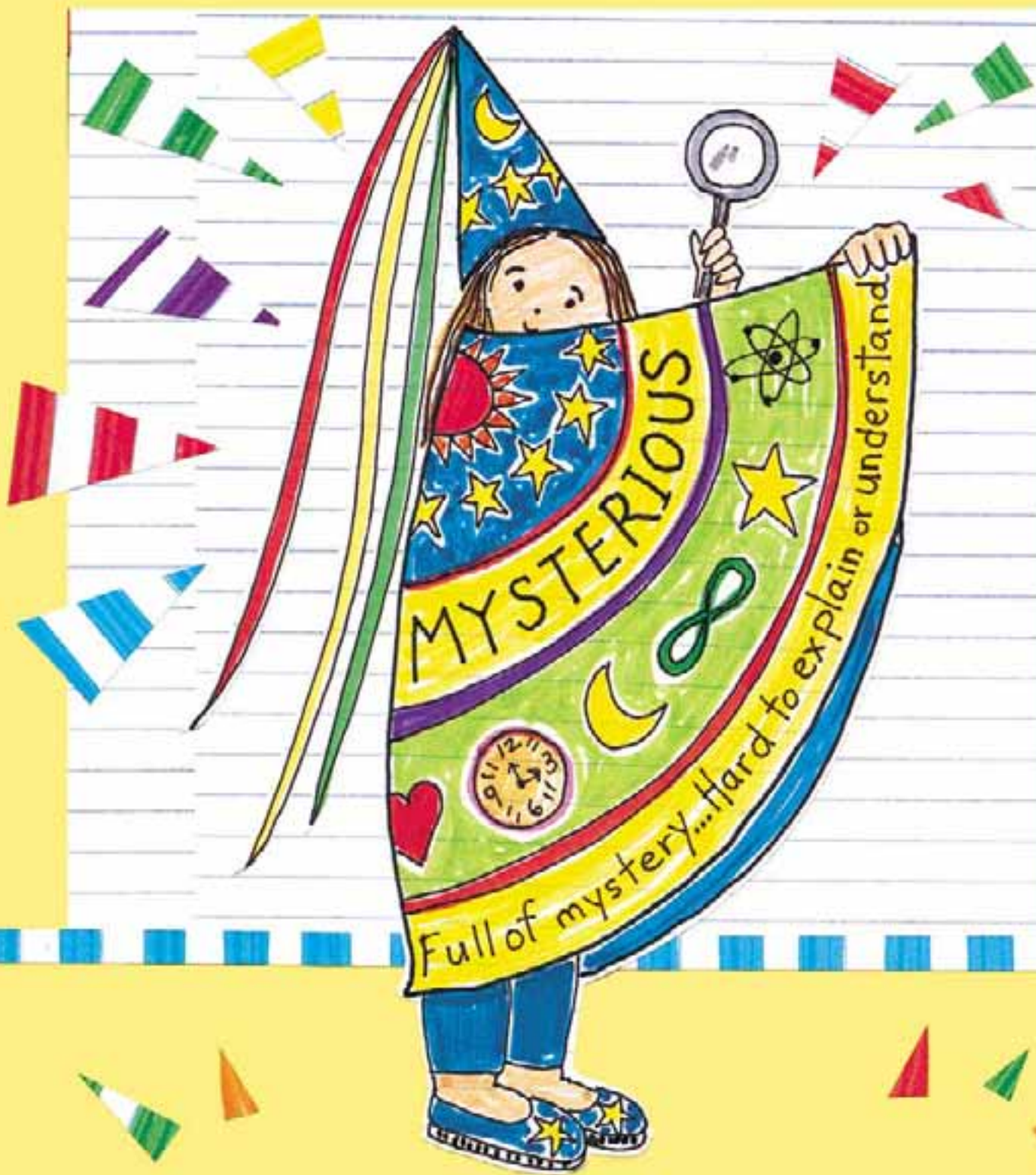




To my **astonishment**: *great shock and amazement*, I won a gold trophy for The Most Original Use of a Word in the Tenth Annual Vocabulary Parade.

So this time Mom was right. There was gold in this mistake.

And next year I think I'm going to be . . .



Miss Sterious,
Investigator of All Things Mysterious!



A Few Words About Debra Frasier

Debra Frasier's fifth-grade daughter said to her one day, "Mom, today I figured out that *miscellaneous* is not a person." Her daughter's new wisdom gave Debra two gifts: a good laugh and the idea to write *Miss Alaineus*. Debra says her books take a long time because she loves the creative process. Being creative is nothing new for Debra. As a child in Florida, she used to make collages with old wood she found on the beach and miles of tape.

For the illustrations, Debra again turned to her daughter for inspiration. Papers, glue, scissors, and pencils that were crammed in her daughter's desk gave her the idea for the story's school setting. At last Debra had completed a fun adventure about the usually tame world of vocabulary.

Another book by Debra Frasier:
Out of the Ocean



Author's Purpose

Authors of fiction usually write to entertain, but they may have another purpose. What clues can help you figure out if Debra Frasier had more than one purpose for writing *Miss Alaineus*?



For more information about Debra Frasier visit
www.macmillanmh.com



Comprehension Check



Summarize

Use your Character and Plot Chart to help you summarize only the most important events that lead to Sage's creative solution to her problem.

Character	Plot

Think and Compare



1. *Miss Alaineus* is written from Sage's point of view. How does this help you know what she is like? What words or phrases would you use to describe her? Use story details in your answer. **Story Structure: Character and Plot**
2. Reread page 38. What does Sage mean when she says, "there was gold in this mistake"? Use details from the story to support your answer. **Analyze**
3. Even the most **capable** people make mistakes. How do you feel when you make a mistake? Compare your feelings to Sage's feelings. **Analyze**
4. Why might it be helpful to have a sense of humor when you are trying to solve a problem? **Evaluate**
5. Look back at "The Talent Contest" on pages 18–19. How is Danny's experience similar to Sage's? Use details from each selection.

Reading/Writing Across Texts



Language Arts

Genre

Nonfiction Articles provide information about real people, places, or events.

Text Feature

Photographs and Captions give visual examples that help explain what the text states.

Content Vocabulary

competition

orally

eliminates



The National

SPELLING BEE

by Nicole Lee

Does the word *autochthonous* sound familiar? Luckily, to David Tidmarsh, it did. David correctly spelled *autochthonous* to win the 77th National Spelling Bee. David, from South Bend, Indiana, won the spelling championship at age 14. In the final round of **competition**, David beat Akshay Buddiga, a 13-year-old boy from Colorado.

Welcome to the exciting and intense world of spelling bees. The National Spelling Bee takes place each June in Washington, D.C. The competition has been around for a long time. It began in 1925 with only nine contestants. In 2004 there were 265 contestants ranging in age from 8 to 15. Contestants for the National Spelling Bee come from English-speaking countries all over the world. Students from Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and even Saudi Arabia have competed in the National Spelling Bee.

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to advance to the National Spelling Bee finals. Students spend a lot of time preparing for competition. The words chosen for the competition are chosen from the dictionary by a panel of word experts. There are more than 470,000 words in the dictionary, and any one of these words could be chosen for the competition. David spent several months preparing for the finals. He spent many hours studying a dictionary, and a list of 10,000 words that he created. Fortunately for David, *autochthonous* was one of the words on his list. After David won he said, "I was just hoping I got a word I studied."



Spelling contestants spend months poring over the dictionary.



Intense moments
on David's road to
V-I-C-T-O-R-Y!

arete

The purpose of the National Spelling Bee is to encourage students to improve their spelling, broaden their vocabularies, and develop correct English usage. During round one of the championships, the spellers have to take a 25-word written test. In round two, each student spells a word **orally**. Next, the judges score the students. The top 90 students move on to round three. Any mistake during round three or the later rounds **eliminates** the speller. Some of the words that David had to spell before the 15th and final round were *gaminerie*, *arete*, *balancelle*, and *sumpsimus*.



Akshay (left) and
David anxiously
await their turns.



Spellers qualify for the finals by winning locally sponsored spelling bees in their home communities. Qualifying for the national competition is a significant accomplishment. Every student who advances to the national competition is awarded a prize. The champion gets \$17,000, a set of encyclopedias, an engraved trophy, and several other prizes. When asked what he would do with the prize money, David said, “I might put it in a savings account,” and “I’ll probably take a little and spend it at the mall.”



autochthonous



gaminerie



Connect and Compare



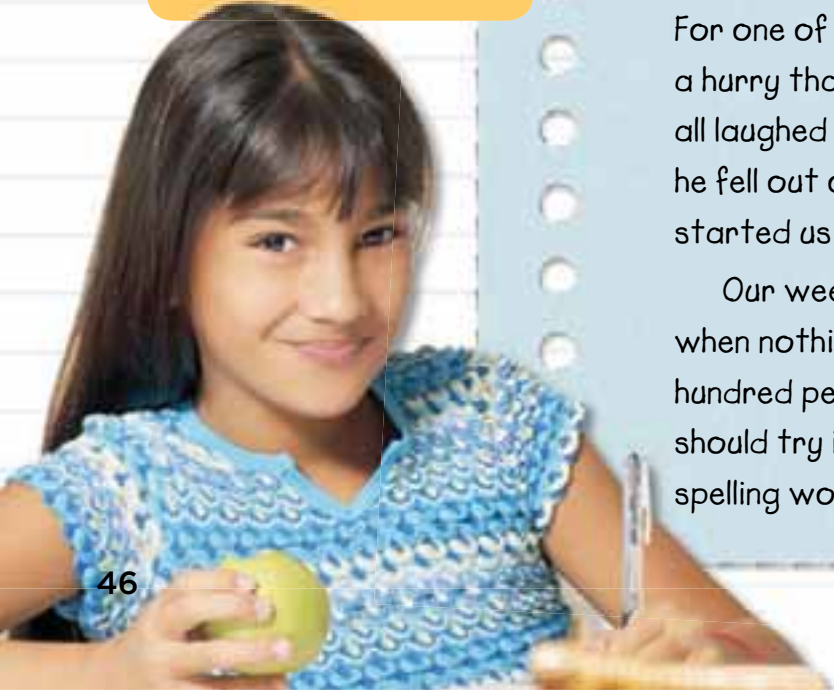
1. Look at the photo of the spellers sitting on the stage. What feelings do you think the contestants experienced during the competition? **Photographs and Captions**
2. What advice do you think David would give to someone who wanted to enter a spelling bee? **Evaluate**
3. Think about this article and *Miss Alaineus*. Compare how Sage prepared for the vocabulary bee and David prepared for the spelling bee. **Reading and Writing Across Texts**



Language Arts Activity

Does your state have spelling bees? Research spelling bees in your state and write a paragraph about what you need to do to enter a local spelling bee.

Find out more about the National Spelling Bee at
www.macmillanmh.com



Writer's Craft

A Good Paragraph

A **good paragraph** has a topic sentence that lets a reader know what the subject of the paragraph will be. Supporting details add information about the subject.

My topic sentence is a clue that practicing spelling words is the main idea of the paragraph.

I use supporting details to add information about my topic sentence.

WRITE ABOUT A SCHOOL CONTEST

Always One Hundred Percent

by Christina M.

Every Friday morning my friends and I sit on the rug in class and practice our spelling words before the weekly test. We have a contest to see who can spell the words the fastest. One of us sits in our teacher's chair and reads the spelling words. Whoever slaps the floor first gets a two-second head start spelling the word.

A few weeks ago, Miguel had been reading the words, and Kevin and I were spelling them. For one of the words, I lifted my hand in such a hurry that it flew back and hit my nose. We all laughed hysterically. Miguel laughed so hard he fell out of the teacher's chair, and that started us laughing all over again.

Our weekly contest works out well even when nothing funny happens. We get one hundred percent on our spelling tests! You should try it. It's a fun way to study spelling words.

Your Turn

Write two or three paragraphs about a school contest that you have entered or that you would like to enter. Tell about what happened to you and how you felt. Be sure to use a topic sentence and supporting details in each paragraph. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



Writer's Checklist

- ☒ **Ideas and Content:** Are my ideas clear?
-  ☒ **Organization:** Did I use a topic sentence to create a strong beginning for my **paragraph**?
- ☒ **Voice:** Do the details tell how I feel? Do they make my writing sound like something I would have written?
- ☒ **Word Choice:** Did I choose strong words to tell what is happening?
- ☒ **Sentence Fluency:** Did I join related sentences to make compound sentences?
- ☒ **Conventions:** Did I capitalize proper nouns?
Did I check my spelling?